

## 2010 CHEA Award for Outstanding Institutional Practice in Student Learning Outcomes

In 2005, the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) established the *CHEA Award for Institutional Progress in Student Learning Outcomes*. Since its inception, the award has acknowledged outstanding institutional progress in developing and applying evidence of student learning outcomes as part of the ongoing evaluation and improvement of college and university programs.

In 2009, the award was renamed the *CHEA Award for Outstanding Institutional Practice in Student Learning Outcomes*. The emphasis of the *CHEA Award* has shifted from “institutional progress in student learning outcomes” to “outstanding institutional practice in student learning outcomes.” This change reflects the increasing attention that institutions and programs are paying to this important issue and the substantial gains that have been made in addressing student learning outcomes since CHEA initiated the award program.

### Student Learning Outcomes: Their Increasingly Important Role

Evidence of student achievement – student learning outcomes – plays a prominent role in discussions of higher education accountability, quality and effectiveness. At the same time, developing and using capacity to address student learning outcomes is a complex and significant challenge for colleges and universities, whether pursued at the level of an institution, a program or a major.

Institutional efforts to provide evidence of student achievement through student learning outcomes are vital, building public confidence that higher education and accreditation are indeed responsive to the needs of students and society. The *CHEA Award* highlights colleges and universities that have demonstrated

their commitment to and developed highly effective practice to use student learning outcomes, as well as their willingness to share the practices they have developed with the higher education and accreditation community.

### The Selection Process

A committee selected from higher education institutions, higher education associations, accrediting organizations and the public judges the winners on the basis of four award criteria:

- Articulation and evidence of outcomes
- Success with regard to outcomes
- Information to the public about outcomes
- Using outcomes for improvement

In addition to the four criteria, the committee looks for evidence outcomes embedded in an institutional culture, good use of current technology in the methods and tools to track outcomes, extensive use of faculty and strong faculty support, institutional leadership that is dedicated to the importance of outcomes and approaches to outcomes that can be replicated at other institutions.

Of 30 applications received this year, four institutions were selected to receive the 2010 *CHEA Award*.

### The Winners of the 2010 CHEA Award

The winners of the 2010 *CHEA Award* are Capella University (MN), Portland State University (OR), St. Olaf College (MN) and the University of Arkansas - Fort Smith (AR) College of Education. All of these institutions and programs provide excellent examples of institutional practice and effective approaches to the use of student learning outcomes.

## Capella University

Capella University is an online university offering graduate and undergraduate education to more than 30,000 working adults. Capella has been active in developing higher education accountability initiatives, including Transparency By Design, an initiative by adult-serving colleges and universities to provide detailed information on student learning outcomes.

For the last decade, Capella University's faculty have developed an outcomes-based curricular model that begins with adult learners' educational needs and builds programs and courses to meet those needs. The university's assessment system capitalizes on this model and its online delivery approach to gather data on the learning process and to report on outcome attainment, enabling leadership to target quality improvement efforts. Details on this approach and program learning outcome results are published on Capella's Learning & Career Outcomes Website ([www.capellaresults.com](http://www.capellaresults.com)).

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## Portland State University

Portland State University, a public state university, has an overall enrollment of more than 28,000, including undergraduate and graduate students. The university has created an institution-wide general education program, giving students the opportunity to participate in either a four-year Honors Program for high-achieving students or an innovative four-year University Studies Program. These two programs serve as a model for best practices in integrating assessment throughout an institution.

Faculty members from every academic discipline at Portland State University engage in teaching and assessing courses in the Honors Program and the University Studies Program. These programs clearly articulate expected student learning outcomes, implement exemplary institutional practices to assess student outcomes by analyzing representative student work, disseminate critical findings and use the data to improve student learning.

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## St. Olaf College

St. Olaf College is a nationally ranked liberal arts college with an enrollment of approximately 3,000. The college has developed an innovative model of assessment that sustains and supports student learning. Strong faculty leadership, extensive faculty and staff engagement, administrative support, grant-funded inter-institutional partnerships and student engagement in developing instruments and analyzing results are components of the college's assessment work.

St. Olaf College uses evidence of student learning to inform faculty development, increase collaboration and inspire instructional improvement. The college also works to develop innovative approaches to gathering evidence of student learning and shares information on best practices in fostering mission-driven, meaningful and manageable assessment with other higher education institutions.

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## University of Arkansas - Fort Smith College of Education

The University of Arkansas - Fort Smith, one of 13 academic institutions in the University of Arkansas System, is a public, four-year university with an enrollment of approximately 7,000. The Fort Smith campus evolved from a two-year college in 2002. The 2010 *CHEA Award* was received by the university's College of Education.

The College of Education implements a series of program assessment to assure continuous growth, student success and cyclic input of research on best practices. Collected assessment data is reviewed and analyzed through Data Analysis Review Events (DAREs) that involve stakeholders in interpreting the information, determining areas for improvement and ways to support continued success and implementing changes in the program based on the evidence. The result is a program that remains current on state and national initiatives and that models the reflective practice of university graduates.

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### Selection Committee for the 2010 CHEA Award

- **Kate Aberle**, Deputy Executive Director, ABET, Inc.
- **Therese Cannon**, Executive Associate Director, Western Association of Schools and Colleges
- **John Dill**, Chief, Civilian Education and Professional Development, Department of Defense Civilian Personnel Management Service
- **Peter Ewell**, Vice President, National Center for Higher Education Management Systems
- **Michael Lambert**, Executive Director, Distance Education and Training Council
- **Burks Oakley**, Professor Emeritus, University of Illinois
- **Thomas Paradis**, Director of Academic Assessment, Northern Arizona University
- **Terrel Rhodes**, Vice President for Quality, Curriculum and Assessment, Association of American Colleges and Universities
- **David Shulenburg**, Vice President, Association of Public and Land-grant Universities
- **Julia Williams**, Executive Director, Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology

### Past CHEA Award Winners

Since the establishment of the *CHEA Award* in 2005, 18 colleges and universities (including this year's recipients) have received this award. Past recipients are:

#### 2006

- The Community College of Baltimore County, High-Impact Course-Level Learning Outcomes Assessment Projects (MD)
- Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis, Implementing the Principles of Undergraduate Learning at IUPUI (IN)
- James Madison University (VA)
- Southern Illinois University Edwardsville (IL)

#### 2007

- Bowling Green State University, Student Success Initiatives and Student Achievement Assessment Committee (OH)
- Mesa Community College, Student Outcomes Assessment Program (AZ)
- Oral Roberts University, University-wide ePortfolio and Infrastructure for a Culture of Evidence (OK)
- Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology, The Rose Portfolio System and Institute-Level Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Project (IN)
- University of Saint Mary, Department of Education (KS)

#### 2008

- Hocking College, Academic Affairs Department (OH)
- Kennesaw State University, Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (GA)
- Seaton Hall University, Stillman School of Business (NJ)

#### 2009

- Delaware Technical & Community College, Planning and Assessment Program (DE)
- Northern Arizona University, Office of Academic Assessment (AZ)

# Accreditation Central: The CHEA Website

Visit the CHEA Website regularly to learn more about CHEA activities and events. CHEA publications such as *Inside Accreditation* and the *Federal Update* are available and keep members, accrediting organizations and the public informed on a range of accreditation-related issues. The Website includes a *Database of Institutions and Programs Accredited by Recognized United States Accrediting Organizations*, an *International Directory* providing contact information on quality assurance and accreditation bodies as well as ministries of education around the world, fact sheets, links to valuable information resources and more.

The CHEA Website features sections on:

- [Government Relations](#)
- [Databases and Directories](#)
- [Informing the Public About Accreditation](#)
- [Recognition](#)
- [Degree Mills and Accreditation Mills](#)
- [CHEAnews Room](#)
- [CHEA Research and Publications](#)
- [International Quality Review](#)
- [About CHEA](#)
- [International Directory](#)
- [CHEA Member Services](#)

Go to the CHEA home page for the [CHEAnews Room](#) to obtain the latest information on CHEA and upcoming CHEA events. The home page also features a link to CHEA's [Twitter](#) page.

## CHEA

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